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Cult Leader's Papers Indicate Links to U.S. Embassy

JONESTOWN, Guyana, Dec. 4 (AP) — Senior aides of the cult leader, Jim Jones, maintained much closer relationships with United States Embassy consular officials in Georgetown, Guyana, than has so far been officially acknowledged, Mr. Jones's personal papers indicate.

The papers, acquired by The Associated Press, indicate that one United States official promised to "discreetly" find out who within the embassy was spreading rumors questioning Mr. Jones's religious beliefs. They also show that the embassy complied with the vehement requests of Mr. Jones's aides for advance lists of Jonestown residents whose relatives had asked the embassy to investigate the commune.

The personal papers from Jonestown make it clear that the intention of getting the names in advance was to fully brief the subjects before the American officials arrived at Jonestown.

The United States State Department has said that in 75 interviews by consular officials with People's Temple members in Jonestown, no evidence was uncovered of repression or of people wanting to leave the community.

Link to U.S. Consul Indicated

The Jones papers suggest that there was a close relationship between Richard McCoy, the consul at the United States Embassy until last May, and several top Jones aides in Georgetown, including his public relations chief, Sharon Amos, Terri Jones and Tim Carter. Mr. McCoy, who now serves on the Guyana desk at the State Department in Washington, has not been available for comment.

In a memo to Mr. Jones dated last April 4 this year, Miss Amos said she telephoned Mr. McCoy to complain that the American Embassy was spreading rumors that Mr. Jones was an atheist. According to the memo, Mr. McCoy said that deputy chief of mission, John Blacken, had mentioned that Mr. Jones was starting to doubt the existence of God.

Mr. McCoy expressed doubt that Mr. Blacken was the source of rumors because "John was very sophisticated in knowing what to say and what not to." He promised Miss Amos that "he would discreetly find out who was the one in the embassy that was talking."

Sought to Influence Judge

Mr. McCoy was quoted as fully informing cult aides on pressures on Congress and the State Department over the custody battle between Mr. Jones and Grace and Timothy Stoen involving 6-year-old John Victor Stoen. The Amos memo said, "the assistant secretary of consular affairs told Dick when Dick was visiting recently in Washington that in no certain terms would they consider embassy involvement at all in this case."

Other personal Jones' documents showed that during this same period senior Guyanese officials were attempting to influence the local judge handling the custody case in Guyana.

Regarding Mr. McCoy's views on Jonestown, a March 8 document refers to him as saying "when he is asked about us, he tells people what we are doing here. He says he tells people that no allegations have been proven against us, that we are decent, law abiding citizens who are trying to help develop Guyana. He tells people that none of the charges against us have any substantiation."

Closer links between Mr. McCoy and the cult are revealed in memos detailing the first meetings between Jones aides and his replacement Douglas Ellis. The updated document signed by Terri Jones and countersigned by Mr. Jones's wife, Marceline, quoted Mr. Ellis as mentioning that "there were a few people he had to see by request of some letters he had received."

The memo writer continued, "I said Dick always told us who he had to see because we could make sure they were there...I felt he [Ellis] was reluctant about this though, it was like he would tell us when he got there so we couldn't brief them."

An undated unsigned memo addressed to Mr. Ellis expresses the increasing frustration of the Jones aides over the consul's unwillingness to give an advance list.

"We are sick of this and do not appreciate being interrogated again. We are upset about it," the document said, referring to an upcoming visit to the Jonestown settlement by the consul. "We were told by McCoy that we would never have to go through this again," the memo said.

It later added, "everyone thinks it might be them" who would be interviewed. "It is upsetting people because in the past Dick McCoy has always told us who."

DO NOT FORGET THE FREEDOM

NYT 12/5

The Story Is Officially Over, but the Imprint Remains

WP 12/5

GEORGETOWN

ONE DAY LAST week, the banner headlines in Guyana's government-owned morning paper suddenly shifted from the Jonestown tragedy to the shortage of chickens throughout the nation.

In the view of many Guyanese, that was the official signal that as far as they were concerned, the Jonestown story was over.

The shopkeepers, the taxi drivers, the hotel clerks and the ordinary people on the streets of Georgetown, who begged foreign journalists for more information, still remain bewildered by all that has happened, from the horror of Jonestown itself to the descent of hundreds of foreign journalists on their small country.

And although few groups are more entitled to a full explanation, the people of Guyana are the least likely ever to get one.

As in many poor countries, the two major daily papers—the Chronicle and the Citizen—are government-owned. Journalists screen their stories through a "comrade" stationed in their newsroom by the Ministry of Information. The censorship has been heavy in the government papers, although several opposition newspapers seem able to print what they want.

When Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) first came to the country, the government dailies reported only that he was there for discussions with Guyanese officials. There was no mention of Jonestown.

A week later, after Ryan and more than 900 others were dead, the papers made no mention of the questions raised in the Guyanese Parliament about how it all happened, about how the weapons used to enforce the suicide order entered the country, or about how Jonestown managed to escape the country's strict currency controls and accumulate a stash of hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of U.S. dollars.

And when questions were posed by reporters, the government's chief spokesman, Information Minister Shirley Field-Ridley, literally fled down hallways of the Parliament building to avoid them. Subsequently she locked herself in her office, refusing to come out.

What little inside information local journalists could dig out often was funneled to foreign reporters. "There's nothing we can do with this," one said. "It would never make it into print."

AT THE HEIGHT of the activity in Guyana, U.S. Embassy officials also began longing for an end to it all. They would reminisce about the way things used to be.

Every new Foreign Service officer sent to Guyana, they said, had on important lesson to learn right away. "If you sent a letter to the State Department that said 'Guyana, S.A.' on it, it would wind up at the South Africa desk in Washington.

"You had to learn to write 'SOUTH AMERICA' all over it in big letters in order to make sure it got to the right place. They never heard of us up there," said one official.

lomats in Guyana were in Guyana. Hard as the embassy staff tried during the difficult period, efficiency and sensitivity seemed constantly to elude them, especially when they teamed up with the Guyanese government.

Victims of various Jonestown crimes, for example were placed in the same hotel with potential suspects. They glowered at each other for days.

When the white embassy van arrived at Peoples Temple headquarters in Georgetown to pick up a batch of survivors for the trip back to the United States, the highest-ranking U.S. employe on hand was the van's driver, a local chauffeur.

Undoubtedly the most unhappy embassy employe was Stepney Kibble, the press spokesman who normally runs the U.S. library in Georgetown and is unused to dealing with panicked American reporters.

"They made me look like an ass, "Kibble wailed one morning. "They made me look like an ass on network television. My 84-year-old grandmother was probably watching.

"They called me a liar. They called me an idiot. They called me an ass and everything else under the sun. It's one thing to say the United States government isn't doing its job, but why do they have to get so personal about it?"

APART FROM THOSE directly involved in the Jonestown horror, the most tragic figure had to be the Georgetown optometrist in the bar at the Tower Hotel.

He had just been commissioned to make hundreds of pairs of glasses for the residents of Jonestown and had, in fact, delivered the spectacles to the campsite along with a bill for 14,000 Guyanese dollars, equivalent to about $5,600.

The next thing he knew, everyone was dead. The glasses were gone and the bill was never paid.

It could put him out of business, the optometrist told reporters as he sipped another drink. "And they were going to make me the official Jonestown supplier, too."

The foreigners represented another extreme, sometimes no less distasteful. By the fifth or sixth day, many of the survivors had been bought, sold and traded among the more mercenary of the foreign journalists seeking their story.

This became apparent when reporters were trying to interview one of the Jonestown families that had survived. While one of the younger daughters spoke freely to reporters, other members of the family could be heard caucusing in the background, discussing how to shut her up.

"Our agent is going to be furious," said one. "We weren't supposed to be talking to anyone until he gave the word."

In another corner of the same hotel, a representative of the National Enquirer sat guarding his purchase: one of the Jonestown survivors. When any other reporter would approach, the Enquirer representative would raise his hand to silence the survivor and remind him of the deal they had made.

Some publications, especially the German magazines, were paying large sums for exclusive rights to the survivors, reportedly as much as $10,000.

Money often was paid on the spot. Payments were followed by a flow of prostitutes into the hotel late at night, apparently summoned by a few of the newly enriched survivors.

Some American reporters who arrived at Jonestown after most of the bodies had been cleared made much of the looting by Guyana residents that had apparently gone on at the campsite after the mass suicide.

When the reporters left, however, many had their pockets stuffed with letters and documents left among the debris by the hundreds of Jonestown victims.

Some of the American GIs removing bodies from the scene seized the same opportunity. They sold their documents to reporters eager for any scrap of information for their stories.

—*Fred Barbash*